Felicitation to Dalai Lama

3291. DR. K. MALAISAMY:
SHRI S. ANBALAGAN:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has avoided this time to accord felicitation to Dalai Lama when he returned after receiving the most honoured cap "US Congress Award" when India has felicitated him often on earlier occasions;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether there is a change in policy in dealing with him; and

(d) whether it is to please China?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) A felicitation ceremony was organised for the Dalai Lama by the Gandhi Peace Foundation and the All-Party Indian Parliamentary Forum on 3 November 2007 in New Delhi.

(c) and (d) There is no change in Government's policy.

Indians in jails of Pakistan

3292. SHRI VARINDER SINGH BAJWA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a number of Indians are still languishing in jails in Pakistan, some of them for over thirty years after completing the terms of sentences awarded by Pakistan courts;

(b) the number of such Indians in Pakistan jails according to Government's information; and

(c) the steps that are proposed by Government to get them released and repatriated?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) Yes. According to available information, there are 436 fishermen and 205 Indian prisoners in jails in Pakistan. In the absence of consular access, it is not possible to determine the details of sentences awarded.

(c) The issues related to release of Indians in jails in Pakistan are taken up with Government of Pakistan consistently in different bilateral meetings including at the highest level. During the visit of EAM to Pakistan on January 13-14, 2007, it was decided to form a Judicial Committee comprising judges from India and Pakistan to ensure expeditious release and humane treatment of prisoners in either country. The Committee first met on 26-27 February, 2008 in New Delhi. It recommended that a consolidated list with full particulars and their present status of nationals in each other's jails be exchanged on 31 March, 2008 and those prisoners who have completed their sentences and whose national status has been verified be released forthwith. The lists of prisoners have been exchanged by the two Governments on March 31. Government expect the Government of Pakistan to implement the recommendations of the Judicial Committee to release and provide consular access to all detained fishermen and prisoners.